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Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

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Letter dated 12 January 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to you in relation to the letter dated 21 November 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council (A/71/627-S/2016/986).

Azerbaijan has developed a practice of misusing every opportunity to level unsubstantiated allegations against Armenia and mislead the international community. The communication from Azerbaijan is a stark manifestation of attempts to justify its continuing blockade, renewed aggression and incessant hostility against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Armenia's inputs to the annual report of the Secretary-General entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (A/71/91) are based on established facts. The replies by the Government of Armenia on the topic have been consistently provided for many years with identical or similar language, which reflects the fact of a continued policy of unilateral coercive measures against Armenia carried out by Turkey and Azerbaijan. While the motives of Azerbaijan's present reaction to Armenia's aforementioned communication to the report of the Secretary-General are obscure, the mere fact that, following years of defiance, Azerbaijan has eventually decided to justify its illegal practice is ironic, to say the least. Azerbaijan's response lacks credibility and integrity. On the one hand, Azerbaijan rejects the imposition of a blockade and a unilateral coercive measure, while on the other hand it tries to justify or even substantiate their existence and necessity by putting forward its

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conflict perceptions and protracted allegations. In effect, Azerbaijan confirms the fact of the imposition of a blockade against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Since it is the first communication of Azerbaijan under this particular item, we are compelled to share some reference information to shed light on this important issue.

An economic blockade is a type of unilateral coercive measure, which often refers to economic steps taken by one State to compel a change in the policy of another. The application of such measures as a means of political and economic coercion undermines the sovereignty and independence of the affected States and gravely hampers the full enjoyment of all human rights, including the right to life, the right to development and the right of peoples to self-determination. A number of resolutions of the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and the former Commission on Human Rights, as well as recurrent political declarations adopted at major international summits and conferences, have reaffirmed that the application of unilateral coercive measures violates the Charter of the United Nations and international law. It could be considered an aggressively hostile act exercised by the blockading nation.

The imposition of the blockade by Azerbaijan and Turkey is in violation of international law and of the purposes and principles of the Charter. It contravenes the basic principles of the multilateral trading system. Furthermore, owing to this blockade, Armenia, as a landlocked developing country, continues to be deprived of its right to freedom of transit and access to sea under the respective United Nations international legal instruments. These coercive measures against Armenia negatively affect the full and effective realization of its development agenda, causing impediments for the implementation of its economic and social policies.

In its communication, Azerbaijan yet again makes a deliberate attempt to deny responsibility for its policies of aggression and blockade. Furthermore, it distorts the facts concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and misinterprets the Security Council resolutions of 1993. In fact, Azerbaijan is in violation of those resolutions, which urge the parties concerned to cease all hostilities and hostile acts with a view to establishing a durable ceasefire, provide unimpeded access for international relief organizations to the civilian population in the affected areas and pursue negotiations within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) agreed mandate, as well as through direct contacts between them. By resorting to the use or the threat of the use of force and rejecting a number of proposals, including those on confidence-building measures, Azerbaijan obstructs numerous efforts and initiatives undertaken by the Co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group, the only body entrusted with the settlement.

In the world, there exist successful examples of developing economic linkages and building confidence between conflicting parties. Cross-border trade and economic projects have helped to re-establish links between nations, business communities and civil societies and thus contributed to conflict resolution. However, the authorities of Azerbaijan not only prohibit any economic projects and ties with Armenian business and commercial entities, but also strongly discourage and even criminalize people-to-people contacts and interactions between civil society organizations. At the highest political level, Azerbaijan openly declares its

aim to fully blockade Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, which runs counter to the aforementioned Security Council resolutions. The following is just one quote among many from Azerbaijan's incumbent President: "We will continue to isolate Armenia from international and regional projects. This policy is bearing fruit, and the cause for Armenia's difficult economic situation is Azerbaijan." Azerbaijan has been swaying Turkey against the potential normalization of the latter's ties with Armenia. On a number of occasions, the leaderships of both countries have declared that Turkey and Azerbaijan are "one nation, two States", and they unite their efforts towards the marginalization of Armenia.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has reconfirmed once again that unilateral economic measures as a form of political and economic pressure are detrimental to sustainable development. They significantly increase the costs of import and export, entailing additional costs and an under-realization of the trade and development potential. They also severely hamper transit communication routes, economic cooperation and integration with multilateral trading blocs, and create an essential infrastructure deficit.

Unilateral economic measures cannot stifle the realization of human rights, including the right to self-determination, in any part of the world. The unilateral coercive measures imposed by Azerbaijan and Turkey have not been able to compel the people of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh to give up their legitimate aspirations for freedom, independence and development, and this resolute stance will endure and prevail.

I would appreciate it if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 31 and 39, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Zohrab **Mnatsakanyan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative